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ABSTRACT

The impact of enlightened policies and incentives designed to increase girls' enrollment and achievement in education has been marginal in Nepal. Ministry of Education (MOE) goals aimed at increasing girls' participation include increasing the enrollment rate, opening early childhood development centers, promoting recruitment of at least one female teacher per primary school; and having a primary school within walking distance of each village. Barriers to participation are a maze of sociocultural, economic, and political realities that vary by community and even by family. Key barriers at the community level are preferring to educate sons who remain a family asset; opportunity and cash costs of education; early marriage; schools that are not girl-friendly; and higher workload for girls. Four elements of MOE's strategy for increasing access to basic and primary education have major impact on girls and women: launching an Early Childhood Development program; decentralization; increasing private sector and community cost-sharing in education; and compulsory education. The primary programming tools designed to increase the participation of girls and women are incentives targeting girls and women, gender sensitization, and advocacy. Challenges that remain for education for girls and women are attaining relevance, sustaining progress, and ensuring quality education. (Contains 19 references.) (YLB)

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GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION in Nepal

ED 469 238

Education in Nepal has had, and continues to have, dedicated, talented educators. Yet, reminiscent of a jigsaw puzzle, most but not quite all of the essential pieces of a dynamic education service, are in place. Empowering women and girls through education takes more than the pieces, it requires their sensitive, correct interlocking. It must be holistic.

There have been decades of enlightened policies, and an amazing list of incentives, designed to increase girls' enrolment and achievement. Yet the impact has been marginal. Either holism was never achieved or it has been shattered.

The Cheli-beti Programme is reflective of many of the strengths and strategic weaknesses of education programming. The Cheli-beti Programme for out-of-school girls, launched in 1981, is considered by many as one of Asia's leading success stories in girls' empowerment. Cheli-beti was shaped by the participating girls' needs, songs, and vocabulary. It triggered the girls' self-discovery of how to improve life in their remote rural villages. The end-of-project evaluation focused on outputs. Since then, Cheli-beti has inspired, and been modified into, Nepal's national girls' out-of-school literacy programme. However, in the seven years since project completion there has been no impact evaluation. An assessment of what is and is not sustainable is essential in guiding Cheli-beti's off-shoot programs.

The following case study is designed to prompt discussion on the holism needed in girls' and women's basic education. Within this framework, the focus is national policies and implementation mechanisms.

I. The Challenge and The Goals

Nepal's literacy rate has climbed slowly and steadily from the extremely low rate of 5% in the early 1950s to approximately 48%[1] today. Less than half as many women are literate, as men. The breakdown is 30% of women and 66% of men. Human and national development remain impaired by the high level of illiteracy.

The illiteracy rate is nearly twice as high in rural Nepal as in urban areas. It is sharply lower in the mountains and the Terai than in the hills, higher in the far and mid western regions than other developmental regions, and higher in lowest-caste compared to high-caste groups. Within each tier of these profiles, women's literacy rate lags behind that of men.

By the end of this Five-Year Plan (1998-2002), the aim is to increase women's literacy rate to 60% and men's to 80%. This would achieve a 70% literacy rate in 14-45 year-olds.

The need for more extensive and more effective interventions targeting women was reinforced when MoE identified that the gender differential in adult literacy rose from 24% to 27% between 1985 and 1995.

To narrow the gap, HMG is marshalling resources to enrol (1998-2002):

- 2.9 million women and 1.1 million men in literacy classes
- 0.78 million children in out-of-school programmes
- 2.2 million in post-literacy training

A related goal is to reduce dropout to below 25%. The dropout rate for the last five years averaged 29.6%. All initiatives are driven by preference to girls and women, although specific breakout targets are not defined for all components.

Between 1992/93 and 1996/97 1.4 million of the 1.8 million enrolled in non-formal education programmes graduated and were deemed literate. An estimated 70% were women.

1 Unless otherwise indicated, the source of statistics is the Statistics and Computer Section, Planning Division, Ministry of Education, His Majesty's Government of Nepal. MoE documents or interviews with MoE senior managers.

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Approximately two-thirds of the 928,000 children not enrolled in primary schools in 1996 were girls. The stark reality is that 40% of primary school aged girls do not attend school in Nepal.

The 1996 gross enrolment rate for girls was 99% (GER boys-135%), signifying large numbers of under and overage children. The net enrolment rate (NER) for girls was 59%, compared to 79% for boys. The drop-off in girls' enrolment accelerates in the higher grades as does the gender differential. The proportion of girls to boys in lower secondary (Grades 6-8) drops to 38%, down to 36% in upper secondary (Grades 9-10), and plummets to 24% in higher education.

Alarming dropout and repetition levels exist in Grade 1 for both girls and boys. In 1996, nearly one in four Grade 1 girls dropped out and nearly 40% repeated. Only 37% of girls, and 38% of boys, who start Grade 1 are expected to complete the five primary grades. Approximately 10% of children enrolled in Grade 1 complete primary school without repeating at least one grade. Multiple repetition is common.

MoE goals aimed strategically at increasing girls' participation include: increasing the NER of primary school-age girls from 58% to 85% by year 2002; opening 10,000 Early Childhood Development Centres by year 2002; promoting the recruitment of at least one female teacher in each primary school; and ensuring there is a primary school within walking distance of each village.

Each presents a formidable challenge. There are still no women teachers in about 40% of the Nepal's primary schools (Basnyat-interview) and strong social and political barriers obstruct female recruitment. Despite intensive school construction by government and communities in recent years, the closest primary school is still too far away for thousands of girls to attend. The number of primary schools increased from 321 in 1951 to over 22,000 in 1998.

II. The Community Context – Barriers to Participation

The barriers to girls and women participating in education are a maze of socio-cultural, economic and political realities that vary by community and even by family. The following is a synthesis of the project literature review and series of interviews. It aims only to be an indicative introduction to some of the key barriers at the community level.

When families choose which children will or will not be educated, or which will have better educational opportunity, sons are preferred. Educating a son is investing in his ability to look after his ageing parents while educating a daughter is considered a no-return investment. When she marries, she becomes another family's asset.

Both the opportunity and cash costs of education lock girls out of schools. The majority of girls in Nepal are daughters of subsistence farmers living near or below the poverty line. Eldest daughters often provide most of the sibling care. Farm and domestic work also pull girls out of school. Although tuition and books are free in public schools, other forms of student fees may be prohibitive.

Demographic surveys show that 40% of girls get married before they reach 15 years of age. (MoE Country Report 1998) Marriages of 10 or 12-year-olds are not uncommon. With few exceptions, marriage ends their schooling. This adds to the cycle of maternal illiteracy that diminishes the chance of their daughters being schooled. Studies show that maternal illiteracy is a significant factor, far more than paternal illiteracy, in depriving daughters of schooling. (UNICEF 1996) Negative attitudes held by both sexes toward girls' education, especially among illiterate parents, have been well documented.

Some groups fear that an educated girl will have a harder time finding a husband. Others believe that co-ed classes or walking more than short distances to school compromise their daughters' reputations and marriage prospects. In urban areas, teasing and risk of abuse or kidnapping are disincentives to girls schooling. The rampant absenteeism of teachers, often leaving classes unsupervised, increases parental anxiety.

Schools are seldom girl-friendly. Many have no female teachers to act as role models. Few male teachers have had gender sensitisation training to equip them to nurture the participation of girls or to validate girls' life experience within the classroom. The majority of primary schools have no toilets or running water.

Class times often conflict with household or sibling care duties. Few schools have ECD programmes to free older sisters of their child care obligations. Hours of daily sibling care, domestic and farm work reduce girls' attendance and leave girls less time than boys to study, contributing to underachievement and dropout.

There is substantive analysis showing that girls' workload is more excessive than boys'. Some studies document girls in some age groups having twice the average daily workload as boys. (UNICEF 1996: 19) The struggle for girls' achievement is accentuated by the short instruction hours, averaging three hours a day, and a short school year, abbreviated by plentiful holidays and seasonal school closures due to bad weather.

Caste discrimination is also a major reason keeping lower caste girls out of school. In some upper castes, girls' education is hindered by the taboo on women in out-of-home employment.

These and other barriers have specific or disproportionate impact on girls. They overlay many additional inhibitors that equally discourage boys' and girls' attendance. Common concerns include: content that is not relevant, untrained and poorly motivated teachers, poor physical environment, lack of learning materials.

Women are overworked and have precious little time to participate in literacy and non-formal education. In addition to an onerous workload, their work is undervalued. Education is not perceived as an efficient investment in increasing the cash, crop yields or other benefits they bring to the family. Although women invest more time in subsistence and domestic work than men, they are viewed narrowly "as reproducers, not producers" and often have marginal control of how they spend their time. (UNIFEM 1995: 18)

III. The Policy and Planning Framework

The National Planning Commission (NPC), independent of line ministries and positioned above them, is chaired by the Prime Minister. The NPC develops Nepal's five-year development plans. The government's Five-Year Plan, and the budget for the yearly ministry workplans that flow from it, are approved first by the Ministry of Finance, then by parliament. This is the first year of the ninth national five-year plan (1998-2002).

The MoE is the paramount line-ministry responsible for policy, planning and implementation of primary and basic education, guided by the Basic and Primary Education Master Plan 1991-2000. Policy and planning for girls' and women's education is integrated into the ministry's plan.

Internal policy development on both formal and non-formal education fronts has fractured since the 1991 launch of the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) which has been the main delivery agent for primary and basic education this decade. BPEP Phase I, with its large contingent of contract staff and extensive secondments from MoE units, left the education system with duplicate units in responsibility areas such as curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, women's education etc. The disparity in programming resources, personal income and subsequent status between project and non-project MoE staff has created tensions that hamper the relationships essential for holistic policy development and efficient implementation.

There is no critical mass of women at senior policy-making levels of government. Within MoE, the two highest-ranking women are under secretaries, third-tier positions in Nepal's bureaucracy. There has been talk, but no action, of appointing women to the National Planning Commission. None of the five external advisors to BPEP is a gender specialist.

Phase I of BPEP ended in 1997. It made a significant contribution in curriculum and textbook development, training of teachers and MoE personnel, and in school rehabilitation and construction. MoE is prudently taking the opportunity for major organisational restructuring prior to the start of the second five-year phase of BPEP. The restructuring will create two large MoE departments, primary and secondary. The mainline MoE primary department will reassume the major role in education delivery. The BPEP project team will be downsized to focus on donor coordination, financial monitoring, human resource development, innovations and pilots, and construction. BPEP will be semi-autonomous, linked to MoE by a board.

Non-formal education policy is proposed by the National Non-Formal Education Council (NNFEC), chaired by the MoE minister. The MoE restructuring is equally as significant in non-formal as in formal education. The Council's delivery agent will soon be a newly-formed National Centre for NFE. The Centre aims to co-ordinate all GO, NGO and INGO delivery of literacy-linked NFE initiatives as well as manage MoE direct delivery of NFE programming. There will no longer be splintered NFE units within the BPEP, the mainline Ministry and the Council's

secretariat. The previous splintering was highly detrimental to women's literacy initiatives, the keystone of MoE non-formal programming.

The Ministry of Women and Social Welfare (MoWSW) was founded in Sept. 1995 after the global women's conference in Beijing. MoWSW is responsible for facilitating a partnership between line ministries that will result in cohesive, high-impact delivery of a national action plan for girls' and women's empowerment. A Central Coordination Committee of the secretaries of 14 ministries, chaired by the Minister of WSW, is to ensure gender mainstreaming and implementation of a collective gender-aware vision.

III.i. Policy and Planning Issues

Holistic policy and planning for girls'/women's education requires genuine cooperation between ministries, within MoE, between formal and NFE, and between government and non-government stakeholders. The infrastructure exists but is marginally functional. The MoWSW Central Coordination Committee (CCC), a forum of all ministry secretaries, has untapped potential. If used strategically, the CCC could launch integrated and multi-sectoral programs with civil society and the private sector.

Indicative of the barriers to inter-ministry co-operation is MoE's framework of operations with UNESCO. At a point when the three UNESCO mandate areas of education, science and culture were housed in one ministry, UNESCO formed a counterpart relationship with the ministry. Since then, science and culture have been separated from the education ministry. The counterpart relationship still exists in the form of the National Commission for UNESCO, housed within MoE. MoE insists on processing all UNESCO contracting for science and culture for an administrative fee that is considered of no value to the line ministries involved.

Co-ordination within MoE is needed. The Ministry's restructuring will not, in itself, end the parochialism separating formal and non-formal education specialists, or contract and ministry specialists. Pro-active leadership, inclusive internal communication processes, and performance-linked recognition will be needed.

District Education Offices (DEOs) are responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MoE programming across Nepal. Their front-line knowledge is excluded from informing and enriching the policy and planning process.

The centralised and government-centric policy and planning process has effectively excluded both the private sector, which delivers education to eight per cent of Nepal's primary student population, and the NGO-INGO education community which is the key innovator and delivery agent of literacy programming. Equally problematic is the absence of parental, School Management Committee (SMC) and Village Development Committee (VDC) input into local school planning and management. Studies show school management committees are dysfunctional in most schools and community participation is almost nil. (CERID-1997a: 20) BPEP Phase II (1998-2003) faces a formidable, belated task in launching community-based school planning.

The National Non-Formal Education Council (NNFEC), launched in 1992, is widely seen as dysfunctional. After restructuring, the Council will need to work tirelessly to earn the credibility it has lost in its formative years. Without stronger NGO relationships, essential input into policy and planning will not exist.

In its early days, the Council erred by taking on a rescue and support role in MoE's problematic literacy implementation. Mired in implementation, which is outside its mandate, the council had insufficient resources for the coordination, awareness-raising and monitoring it was mandated to do. Being an implementer also undermined its credibility in monitoring and evaluation. Stepping into MoE implementation turf closed doors to intra-ministry collaboration. Reflective of stressed relationships, the NNFEC did not succeed in involving the NFE units of BPEP and MoE in a collective, cost-effective order for literacy materials.

The Council's credibility with NGOs was undermined after its task force, composed of government and NGO literacy specialists, developed a respected literacy development plan that was rejected in favour of a rushed, poorly conceived literacy blitz at the request of an incoming minister. (S.B. Shrestha-interview)

The NNFEC, which has a small number of non-government and private sector members in addition to government members, has the potential to be an

inclusive, synergetic policy vehicle. Unfortunately, revolving governments have reduced the council to a token, one-meeting-per-minister forum. Limited funding has also been a constraint. Literacy and non-formal education are allotted about 3% of the national education budget.

An inclusive planning model that deserves replication is the process headed by the Minister of Women & Social Welfare in developing a post-Beijing national Plan of Action. NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, donors and several line ministries worked in 12 subcommittees to develop a comprehensive Plan of Action for HMG's empowerment of women and girls. (MoWSW/CCC 1997)

IV. Strategy – Increasing Girls' and Women's Participation

Four elements of MoE's strategy for increasing access to basic and primary education have major impact on girls and women. They are: launching an Early Childhood Development programme; increasing private sector and community cost-sharing in education; and introducing compulsory education and decentralising.

IV. i. Launching an Early Childhood Development Programme

With Grade 1 dropout and repetition rates soaring, Nepal is embarking on its first nation-wide initiative in early childhood development (ECD). It seeks partners to open 10,000 ECD centres within the next five years. The government will pay for facilitator training, curriculum development, some materials and 50% of the facilitator's salary.

Local and international non-government organisations have been the catalysts for the government entry into ECD, citing the high primary school achievement of children who have attended ECD programmes. UNICEF surveys show the cost per child per primary year averages R2,000. Factoring the cost of Grade 1 dropout and repetition, free books and teacher salaries, UNICEF documented an annual loss of R1.2 billion (US$18,045,113)[2]. The INGO/NGO communities made the case for ECD being a far greater investment.

Expanding the small existing ECD network, a mix of non-profit and commercial operators, is intended to reduce the estimated 15% underage population in Grade 1; improve the teaching/learning environment, student achievement and retention; and increase the return on all stakeholders' investments in education. ECD classes will make it easier for older sisters, the primary caregivers of younger siblings, to attend school.

Popular private schools are testing children for entry into Grade 1. As sons are given preferred access to private school, except in families where overseas education is an option, it would appear that sons are also being favoured with private pre-schooling. Widening the affordable ECD opportunities for boys and girls will stem what could have been a factor widening the gender gap.

In tandem with the ECD initiative, MoE plans to start an automatic promotion plan for Grades 1-3 to end the self-esteem battering that the dysfunctional public school system gives children in early grades. One in three girls now drops out in the first three years. The majority of those reaching Grade 3 would have repeated at least one year. Figures for boys are equally bad.

IV.ii. Decentralisation

Until 1971, communities opened, managed and funded most of Nepal's schools. Then, government took responsibility for schooling under the National Education System Plan (NESP) 1971-76. Neither District Education Offices nor community school committees have yet been involved in policy, planning or curriculum development in the highly-centralised system that resulted. What local decision-making was allowed was largely transferred from the community to the District Education Office. Public participation was reduced down to little more than financial and in-kind contributions. During the late 1970's and 1980's the eroding quality of education further distanced people from their schools.

Although the Decentralisation Act 1982 gave more decision-making authority to the District Education Committees (DECs) and School Management Committees (SMCs), this remained rhetoric, not

2 All US dollar conversions are made at the bank rate of R66.50 per US1.00 (August 19/98)

reality, in most communities. Primary school enrolment nearly doubled (1.75 million to 3.26 million) between 1984 and 1995. So did the number of schools and teachers. Introducing tuition-free schooling and embarking on this rapid physical expansion of the public system exhausted both MoE's budget and capacity to maintain educational quality. Community engagement slid off MoE's list of priorities.

BPEP Phase I planned to delegate more responsibility to the District Education Offices to start a micro planning process with parental input. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The responsible field staff, resource persons, focused on other priorities and said the constraints of weather and rugged terrain prevented their scheduled monthly meetings with school and village committees. PBEP Phase II calls for community capacity-building and the creation of 4,000 Village Education Committees (VEC). Each VEC, a sub-committee of the local VDC, is to develop a School Improvement Plan for its local school. These community-identified needs are to influence funding and programming.

IV.iii. Increasing Private Sector and Community Cost-Sharing

The quality crisis in education has prompted a major private sector entry into primary education, starting in the 1980s. One in 12 children go to private primary schools. In 1991, MoE correctly predicted the evolution of a five-tier basic education system comprised of: one tier for the affluent who send their children to foreign schools; Nepali private schools for the less affluent; public schools for the middle class; out-of-school education for the poor; and no education for the poorest. (NSAC/UNDP 1998: 87).

The opening of a network of high-quality private schools, most with much sought English-language training, has stifled public demands for quality improvement in the public system. "The groups with voice, no longer depend on the public schools for the education of their children." (NSAC/UNDP 1998: 88) This includes the custodians of public education quality – MoE employees.

The erosion of public education and the negative impact on girls are emerging issues. Central Bureau of Statistics 1997 data on household expenditure on education show that private primary schooling is 13 times more expensive than public schooling. With male preference so entrenched, there is a real risk that those with fixed budgets will send their sons to private schools. Only if they can afford it and are committed to girls' education, will their daughters go to private schools. Otherwise, daughters will be relegated to the perceived 'second-class' government school, to less costly out-of-school options or be denied an education. The trend was identified in a 1998 UNDP-funded study on gender mainstreaming in legal literacy. (Jya-interview)

The cost of primary schooling is increasingly falling onto parents and communities. *(see: VIII-funding)* Tuition-free schooling is no longer free. Costs are mounting. Responding to a government shortage of funds in recent years, numerous communities have added classrooms to incomplete primary schools or built new schools, plus paid the teachers. Sometimes communities fund teachers for years before government assumes the cost. Communities are now being encouraged to share-cost early childhood development centres and continue to be major investors in secondary education. This is in addition to the long-standing community investment in repair, operating costs and classroom materials. The government's aim in soliciting more non-government funding of schools is to increase the number of classrooms and access. A negative result is exclusion, especially of girls from poor families.

IV.iv. Compulsory Education

Compulsory education is being piloted in two districts this year, with plans for incremental extension across Nepal. Making primary education compulsory has been repeatedly advocated to increase girls' access to schooling. It was recommended as a strategy in *Mainstreaming Gender Consideration into National Development* (HMG/UNIFEM 1995) and in Nepal's *National Workplan for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment* (MoWSW/CCO 1997).

MoE has asked NGOs/IOs delivering out-of-school programmes in these two districts to transfer their resources elsewhere. The Ministry is committed to accommodating all children either in public schools or outreach classes. Outreach classes, considered formal education delivered via non-formal methods, teach the school curriculum in three-hour daily classes, six days a week.

V. Programming Elements – Increasing Girls' and Women's Participation

The primary programming tools designed to increase the participation of girls and women include: initiatives that specifically target girls and women; gender sensitisation; and advocacy.

V.i. Incentives Targeting Girls and Women

BPEP Phase II plans call for a comprehensive evaluation and retooling of girl-specific incentives. The linchpin of the incentive programme is scholarships. Annual scholarships of R250 are designed to help economically disadvantaged girls in 65 districts and all girls in the remaining 10 most educationally disadvantaged districts to attend school. In 1996/97, there were 58,196 beneficiaries. The programme of the MoE's Women's Education Unit is managed and monitored by DEOs with School Management Committees determining recipients.

Small scholarships/stipends are also available for girls from poor or remote areas to complete secondary education. BPEP Phase II will expand an existing programme of stipends and hostel accommodation for remote area girls to take teacher training.

Evaluations have determined that the scholarships do not show "any indication" of increasing girls' enrolment or attendance, or of decreasing dropout. (CERID 1998d). One MoE evaluation survey showed 84% of scholarship-receiving girls were high caste and only 16% were reaching the target group of poor low caste girls. (Parjuli 1995)

A valuable aid to girls is free textbooks. Textbooks are issued free to all girls for all primary grades. All boys get free texts for Grade 1-3. Boys in disadvantaged areas also get free texts in Grades 4-5.

MoE policy calls for a minimum of one female teacher for each primary school. Between 1992 and 1997, 4,150 female primary teachers were recruited. This is commendable progress although 40% of primary schools are still without female teachers.

Also a positive sign of MoE commitment to girls' empowerment is the Ministry's agreement to do a gender assessment, then revise the primary textbooks that were just developed in 1992-97. The Grade 1-3 student textbooks are being assessed this year to determine their degree of gender balance and their ability to trigger gender awareness. Grade 4 and 5 textbooks are scheduled for assessment next year.

V.ii. Gender Sensitisation

The majority of the gender training has been integrated into NGO/INGO literacy, NFE and rural development programmes. Pivotal contributions have been made through Save the Children-USA's family literacy programme by World Education and the Centre for Development & Population Activities (CEDPA) which have adapted the Health Education and Adult Literacy Programme (HEAL) to Nepal realities, and by an extensive network of indigenous literacy and community development NGOs. Legal literacy advocates including the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) and the Legal Aid and Consultation Centre are leaders in the growing network of legal literacy specialists doing empowerment training. Nari Bikas Sangh is one of several NGOs that is providing gender sensitisation to the husbands of the women participating in their literacy-linked credit programme. Gender training has proven useful in converting anxious husbands into supporters.

Government is just launching a systematic approach to gender training. Within the last two years the Ministry of Women & Social Welfare has conducted gender sensitisation training of government senior managers: secretaries, joint-secretaries and under-secretaries. The next stage will be delivery of UNDP-funded gender mainstreaming support and training to the districts and VDCs. The MoWSW confines its initiatives to government and elected officials. Its recent creation, the Social Welfare Council, is the Ministry's link with civil society. The Council is expected to raise the bulk of its budget through external funding and to deliver its empowerment programming largely via NGOs and INGOs. The infrastructure appears to be in place for a systematic, although regrettably late, start to gender training within government.

These efforts by the MoWSW and the Social Welfare Council are being designed to support line-ministry initiatives. Widely regarded as the most effective government-managed gender sensitisation initiative is the credit and literacy-linked empowerment project, Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW).

Managed by the Women Development Division of the Ministry of Local Development, PCRW has been funded since 1982 by UNICEF, joined later by IFAD, ADB, FINNIDA and others.

MoE has been a late-comer to programmatic gender training. Under BPEP Phase 1, however, the Women's Education Unit has given gender orientation workshops to all women teachers in 40 districts. The workshops give women teachers a rare opportunity to share gender and pedagogical concerns. Only one in five women primary teachers is trained and many are the only female teachers on staff in a male-centric environment.

V.iii. Advocacy

Advocacy is highlighted in MoE policy and plans. However, low priority has been given to increasing popular understanding of the value of educating girls and women. MoE officials appear hesitant to talk about their limited initiatives and embarrassed that the minimal budget has not allowed impact evaluation. The entire 1998/99 budget for the Women's Education Unit's national programme is a meagre R569,000. (US$8,556)

Posters, calendars, radio jingles, newspaper advertising, docudramas, slide shows and other tools have been tried in short bursts, in succession, over the last decade. Poster runs were not extensive enough for poster distribution to all schools. The two docudramas were aired free on national television once and a second showing was paid. Like the slide-show, they have had minimal use. This could change if plans to distribute the docudramas, on cassette, to each primary school are implemented.

One area where the Women's Education Unit has been pro-active is in face-to-face advocacy meetings with parents as part of a UNESCO pilot out-of-school project. Street drama and films on the value of girls' education have been used in the pilots and deemed effective in engaging parents.

VI. Recruiting and Training of Female Teachers

One in five primary teachers is a woman. The number is distressing considering that hiring women teachers has been a stated priority starting with the government's fifth Five-Year Plan (1975-80). The gap between policy and practice is wide.

The importance of training and recruiting female teachers cannot be understated. Seventeen of the 25 districts in Nepal with the lowest number of female teachers also have the lowest number of girls enrolled in primary school and the highest incidence of child labour. Thirteen of these same districts were in the third of all districts with highest primary girl dropout.(ICIMOD 1997)

Only 30% of female teachers are trained, compared to 43.6% of all teachers.

The barriers to women being trained, recruited, and accepted need to be identified and removed. *Gender and Secondary Education* (CERID 1997a), which assessed both primary and secondary education, documented localised examples of resistance to recruiting or training female teachers. The survey also identified ingrained negative stereotypes about female teachers, labelling them as gossips, less competent, and prone to taking more leave than male teachers.

A major weakness in training of women teachers is the lack of monitored in-class practise teaching. Practise teaching is especially valuable to women in overcoming their passivity and developing a confident facilitating style.

Participatory methodology is also especially important in empowering girls and women. Unlike their male counterparts, many Nepali girls and women have been raised as passive observers without having the opportunity to gain the self-confidence to express opinions in public.

Most literacy facilitators are trained in participatory methodology. However, their training is usually short, often less than 10 days. Refresher training is rare. So is the presence of supportive supervisors to help them become comfortable and accomplished in using participatory methods. Without these supports, many literacy facilitators revert to what is familiar and easy: rote methodology. Most literacy facilitators have only grade 5-8 education and find stimulating active participation of their students too demanding of their energy and creativity.

Prior to the BPEP initiative, in-service training had ground to a near halt. Considerable progress has occurred in the project's five years. The MoE has

recently completed a major teacher training programme to introduce all primary teachers to the new curriculum. Training focused on content, not pedagogy.

By the end of this year, communities in nearly half of the districts will also have had training, with the other education stakeholders in their community, in the "whole school approach" to education.

Training alternatives to multi-month facility-based training are vital to women whose sibling, domestic and personal security needs conflict with extended absence from their home communities. A promising radio-centred teacher in-service pilot project is underway. The certificate course couples radio instruction with face-to-face subject-specific instruction. If all goes well, plans will proceed in 1999 to involve 10,000 teachers from across the country. Radio Nepal, the only national AM service, also broadcasts two weekly half-hour programmes for classroom support to ECD facilitators.

MoE mismanagement is attributed to the plodding progress in getting eight ABD-funded teacher training centres operational. Less than 100 of the target of 2,000 teachers were trained this year. The questionably sustainable cost of such a network and the inappropriateness of multi-month centre-based training for women validate the ADB's decision to direct its funding elsewhere.

Neither the Nepal Teachers Association, associated with the Congress Party, nor the pro-communist Nepal National Teachers' Association see teacher training as organisational priorities. Although the NNTA has made efforts to attract women's participation, women teachers have minimal impact on a male-dominated organisation whose political agenda outweighs its professional agenda. (Robins-Interview)

The lack of systematic teacher training in the private sector has prompted the Nepal Education Foundation, a consortia of educator-investors, to fill the gap. In 1999, it will start marketing in-service teacher training packages to private schools. The limited in-service training now done in private schools is sporadic. It often relies on attracting international educators to link training sessions to other commitments, when in Nepal.

VII. Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Material Development

There has been extensive recent curriculum development in primary and non-formal education. Between 1992 and 1997 curricula, teacher manuals and student textbooks were developed for all primary grade subjects. To ensure not only gender balance but girls' empowerment, the Curriculum Development Centre and others involved in curriculum design were given gender training. The resulting product was welcomed positively as a significant improvement but deemed in need of fine-tuning. MoE is already committed to making the revisions needed.

The strength of much literacy material is that it has been designed or extensively adapted to reflect Nepali needs. The Cheli-beti curriculum, designed as part of the Seti Project, is used widely in today's girls' literacy classes. It has been modified for use in the national out-of-school programme which aims to help nine-month course graduates enter the schools at Grade 3.

Much literacy material development has been in partnerships of NGOs, INGOs, UNESCO and UNICEF. A vast reservoir of knowledge in NFE and literacy is available to government from the non-government education sector. PACT and World Education, for example, have conducted thousands of literacy classes within Nepal. World Education partnered with the NNFEC to develop the national primer, literacy training package and materials for adult literacy.

Most adult literacy programming consists of two nine-month modules and a three-month post-literacy course. The first module aims to achieve Grade 2-3 equivalency and the second, Grade 5 or primary completion.

Post-literacy materials are acutely needed as are materials for child workers and other unreached groups. A start has been made recently in both areas. World Education developed, field-tested and printed the first post-literacy package in partnership with the NNFEC. UNICEF is assisting the NNFEC to develop literacy materials for a nine-month earn-and-learn literacy course for urban street children that aims to achieve Grade 5 equivalency.

Women's literacy and out-of-school materials are annually revised, printed and distributed by UNICEF under the auspices of the NNFEC.

Materials development has evolved in response to needs. Among the lessons learned: stand-alone literacy does not meet needs; credit and skill-linked literacy is in high demand; multi-message literacy is much more effective than uni-message literacy (integrating health, sanitation, forestry, appropriate technology, group formation); legal literacy must follow basic literacy.

VIII. Funding

Education averaged 13.23% of total government expenditure and 2.6% of GDP during the 8th Five-Year Plan (1992-97). The basic and primary subsector's share of the education budget is about 55%.

Nearly all programme funding for primary education is through the Basic and Primary Education Programme. Phase I (1992-1997) was funded by grants from DANIDA, UNICEF and UNDP, in-kind donations from JICA, and loans from the WB and ADB. As donors challenged the government's readiness to launch directly into a five-year second phase, DANIDA is funding 1998 activities as a transition year. Key donor negotiations for Phase II (1999-2003) are scheduled for late September. Several new funders have been confirmed, including FINNIDA, EU and NORAD. The extent of Phase II programming and budget are expected to be known by mid-October. One potential downside of this year of donor-driven intensive planning is that BPEP Phase II and its resources will be one year out of synchronization with the government's five-year planning process.

A significant change in Phase II funding is that donors will not be allowed to cherry pick specific programme elements to fund. All donor funds will be pooled and donors given proportionate ownership of the full programme to reduce donor friction/competition over specific programme elements. Although more efficient administration was the driving force, an important side benefit could be deeper and more cooperative involvement by more funders in women's and girls' education initiatives. The move will hopefully advance gender mainstreaming.

The expenditure on the major girls' and women's education and teacher recruitment components of BPEP Phase I was R73,130,082 (US$1,099,700). This breaks down to:

- R4,341,508 (US$65,286) in girls and boys out-of-school literacy. Although there are no gender disaggregated data, 70% of trainees are estimated to be girls. Participants: 194,200 Achievement: 129,878;
- R290,805 US$4,373) for the Chelibeti non-formal literacy training of girls. Participants: 22,640 Achievement: 18,092;
- R8,889,394 (US$133,675) for adult women's literacy. Level 1 Participants: 249,300 Achievement: 160,464; level 2 Participants: 75,775 Achievement: 33,602; level 3 Participants: 12,100 Achievement: 6,400;
- R59,608,375 (US$896,367) for recruitment of female teachers. Target: 4,900 Achievement: 4,150.

In addition there were gender integrated components that BPEP managers could not extrapolate. These included gender analysis input into primary teacher-learning materials, gender components in training of community motivators and VDCs, materials preparation and awareness programming. A rough estimate of this programming for 1998/99 was R3,055,184 (US$45,943).

Girls' programming funded by the recurrent budget of MoE is very limited. It includes funding girls' scholarships and cost-sharing with the World Food Programme of mid-day meal programmes. UNESCO funds two pilot projects on literacy training for disadvantaged girls and women as change agents. These are the only externally-funded non-BPEP projects of MoE's Women's Education Unit.

Staffing for girls and women's education initiatives at the national level consists of only one permanent employee of MoE's Women's Education Unit and a 10-person team who are all BPEP project staff. The Women's Section of BPEP, which focuses on non-formal education, currently also has about 10 staff. Staffing numbers for the next five years will not be clear until MoE's restructuring and BPEP II donor negotiations are complete.

VIII.i. Emerging Issues in Funding of Girls' and Women's Education

The majority of rural families survive below the poverty line. A 1990 study showed out-of-school girls aged six to nine years worked an average of seven hours per day. Girls aged 10-14 worked an average 9.5 hours per day. (UNICEF 1996: 19) The rising cash costs of schooling, in addition to these high opportunity costs, are locking thousands of girls out of school.

Private schools used to be an urban phenomenon but are expanding in district centres and inching into the rural hinterland. Purchasing this premium priced education for sons can leave the family unable to pay for their daughters' schooling. In addition, it is common for the popular private schools to have 'tests' for Grade 1 entry, obliging families to pay for pre-schooling so their child can compete. There is often the expectation that parents will also pay for private tutoring so their child excels in private school. As many private schools operate primarily as boarding schools, this is another barrier to girls' enrolment.

Government policy states Grade 1-10 public education is free. In reality, this is a half truth, as analyses show parents pay nearly as much of the cost of primary education as government. (NSAC/ UNDP-1998: 83) Although there are no tuition fees and free textbooks for primary girls, all public schools charge a one-time fee when the school-year starts as well as examinatio fees. Before the free-school policy, parents paid nominal fees spread over the school year. Now, they pay substantially more in one instalment. A flat fee is charged, irrespective of ability to pay. (CERID 1998a: 48)

IX. Baseline Data

Although the MoE is respected as having one of the best statistical databases in Nepal's government, on-ground data collection has glaring weaknesses. Student numbers are inflated to justify teacher numbers.(NSAC/UNDP-1998: 96) Also lacking are gender-disaggregated breakdowns of urban-rural data.

Baseline data are expected to be significantly strengthened through the household data collection integral to the phased introduction of compulsory education. Several other advances are underway. UNESCO is funding an EMIS system that will incorporate the BPEP and MoE databanks. UNDP is supporting groundwork to ensure that solid gender disaggregated data are collected and processed in the 2001 census. In addition, organisations like the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Research Centre for Educational Innovation & Development (CERID) are making valuable contributions to baseline data. In 1997, ICIMOD evaluated Nepal's 75 districts using 39 development indicators. One of the main objectives was to reflect various components of women's empowerment.

X. Monitoring and Evaluation

There have been sporadic independent assessments and evaluations by the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) based at Tribhuvan University.

Most district-level monitoring is done by small-scale questionnaires administered by the DEO via the resource person or local supervisor. Under BPEP Phase I, project staff monitored the 40 districts in which BPEP worked and the MoE monitored the other 35 districts. The country-wide reports were prepared by MoE. The Ministry was also responsible for national monitoring of programmes funded by its recurrent budget, including girls' scholarships. Monitoring of the districts is done by the five regional directorates, primarily by subject specialists.

The system-wide lack of accountability and the poor quality of education attest to ineffective internal monitoring processes. Data on learning outcomes is virtually non-existent. A positive move is MoE's decision to assess learning outcomes in Grade 3-5 during BPEP Phase II in much more depth than in the past.

Qualitative evaluations and impact assessments are the exception in both government and non-government education and literacy network. Quantitative head counts remain the norm.

Impact assessments of programs/aspects of girls' and women's education are especially lacking. Outstanding examples, as noted earlier, are an impact assessment of the Seti Project, and its original Chelibeti component, and on MoE's awareness programs on the value of girls' education.

XI. The Politics of Education

The politicisation of public education has significant gender impact. Few women have penetrated the male-dominated party politics of Nepal. As teaching positions are seen as training grounds for political organisers and future political candidates, party-allied SMCs and DEOs, who recruit teachers, habitually recruit men. In response, many of these teachers regularly desert their classrooms to do party business. A 1998 World Bank-funded survey of Village Development Committees showed that VDCs which were provided money to recruit teachers, overwhelmingly selected men. (Jha-interview)

Unchecked teacher truancy testifies to weak school supervision, and acquiescence, at the district level. It also speaks to weak accountability by DEOs to their regional supervisors. The politicisation of DEOs and SMCs can also be a barrier to community involvement in local education. Nepal's frequent changes of government have resulted in constant change in district education officers, resulting in ambivalent leadership and disrupted programming.

Politicisation also negatively impacts NGOs, the primary deliverers of literacy to women and girls. At the grassroots level, NGOs that are non-partisan or not affiliated with the ruling party report having little chance to be awarded literacy contracts. Each district has an NGO Coordination Committee that registers NGOs and processes government contracts. Excluded NGOs request direct IO and INGO project funding for their literacy and NFE programmes that circumvents government channels. (Sangroulla-interview) At the national level, some NGOs and empowerment groups are becoming very selective about which projects they undertake in partnership with government. Their hesitancy stems from the disruption to their clients and project delivery when governments change. (LACC Group Discussion)

Lessons and Recommendations

There is a quality crisis in education in Nepal. Five concentrated years of accelerated classroom construction and rehabilitation, curriculum development and human resource development have only put in place the first building blocks of quality public education. Many lessons have been learned but many challenges remain.

Multiple lessons are being learned in the BPEP project. Although its Phase I record in school-building, curricula development and training is impressive, the project's donor-driven conception was flawed. BPEP Phase I served 40 districts while the mainline Ministry served the remaining 35. Resourcing levels differed creating a feeling of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Inefficiencies and duplication, rivalry and disharmony emerged as the internationally-funded BPEP Phase I became the primary and basic education powerhouse while stakeholders widely regarded MoE as secondary and crippled. The current restructuring is designed, among other objectives, to re-assert MoE as paramount, in reality, as well as rhetoric. The BPEP Phase I model is worthy of study by other Asian neighbours in two profoundly conflicting ways: for its faulty organisational structure and for successful elements in programming. The radical design changes in Phase II are instructive in how the Ministry plans to overcome the weaknesses of Phase I. Comprehensive impact analysis of BPEP would make a valuable case study inside and outside Nepal.

Attaining Relevance Primary education today touches the pocket-book of parents but not the essence of girls' lives. There are few openings beyond an agriculturally-based life for these girls, yet education is marketed as a route to an easier life away from the land. More than 90% of Nepal's population is rural (Census 1991) and 90% of all economically active rural women are engaged in agriculture (CBS 1995). Only 4% of the economically active women work in the formal sector.

Although Nepal's economy is slowly broadening and deepening, most opportunities for girls and women in the foreseeable future will be linked to rural micro economies. The deep-rooted socio-cultural devaluation of girls' schooling is well documented. Devaluing their life experience and contribution as agricultural producers doubly marginalizes girls. Awareness raising of both the value of girls' education and the value of being farmers are linked needs in empowering rural girls.

People in rural areas go to school so they can get a job off the land, often with sights on government jobs, and to secure status and privilege. They do not count on education providing useful or productive skills. (CERID-1997b: 5) This is a trumpet call to increase the relevance of education and to deepen the public debate about the role of education.

MoE's token awareness campaigns on the value of educating girls and women warrant expansion into a multi-ministry initiative, impact evaluation and a solid Information, Education, Communication (IEC) approach. Studies show radio is especially effective in retaining literacy skills and in increasing people's competence in communicating.(Smith/Comins/Shrestha-1996) Both government and non-government educators have documented the power of folktales, songs and participatory popular theatre techniques in successfully engaging children and adults.

The potential of traditional arts and communication channels, as well as modern communication media, has only been touched. Exploration and development of these tools would be a valuable aid to female literacy.

Today's primary schools, with rare exception, make no space for the life experience of girls or for local issues, materials and experts. By default, this negates their creativity, survival skills and experience that should be the entry point for engaging girls in education. BPEP Phase II is premised on the reality that community content and community engagement in education will not happen by community initiative. This will require committed tireless effort by DEOs and teacher support including: gender sensitisation training, training in how to integrate local reality into their teaching, and clear messages

that there is permission and recognition for doing so. The new primary curriculum, which promotes gender awareness and integrates health, nutrition and environmental issues, presents the opportunity for children's daily experiences to be incorporated.

Linked is the need for participatory methodology so girls gain the self-confidence to actively contribute to family and community decision-making. A valuable resource exists in Nepal's pool of literacy trainers, many of whom have been training participatory methods for more than a decade. A valuable project for joint NGO-government attention is developing programmes of refresher training, mentoring or materials for teachers/facilitators to build their confidence and competence in sustained use of participatory methods.

BPEP Phase II calls for parents and community members to identify their school needs. If this becomes a genuine grassroots-driven planning process that leads to implementing community needs, it could be pivotal in increasing community ownership of schools. Experience alerts to the need to prevent politicisation, to actively promote women's participation and to integrate gender-awareness. It will be equally important to ensure community capacity building exists so the process, by default, does not become DEO-dominated and to establish respectful and regular government-community communications.

Relevance will also require MoE acquiring more comprehensive and credible gender-disaggregated data to better inform effective planning and efficient budgeting. Linked to this is the need for systematic impact evaluations and evaluation processes.

Educators repeatedly identified three ways to increase the impact and efficiency of women's literacy initiatives: more post-literacy materials; de-politicising government literacy programming at the national and district levels; and placing higher government priority on ensuring the NNFEC becomes an efficient coordinator and fundraiser for national non-formal education initiatives.

Sustainability Sustaining and advancing progress in women's and girls' education requires a permanent human resource base of women's education and empowerment specialists at all government levels: national to district. The government's resistance to creating permanent positions undermines its policy commitment to women's empowerment. Some Women Development Officers who have lived, year after year, on uncertain project funding now discover they are over the age limit to seek other entry channels into the public service. (Maskey interview) They are funded under a project that was initiated in 1982.

The level of political interference in education is not sustainable. It conflicts with expanding opportunities for increased girls' and women's participation. Party politics reduces the chance of women teachers being recruited; reduces parental and community power in SMCs and VDCs; undermines the professionalism of DEOs; and disrupts delivery of both formal and non-formal education.

Sustaining government and donor support for girl and women-specific incentives will depend on results. Nepal uses quotas and token appointments to create space for women. There is a quota for women in VDCs, SMCs and in the legislative assembly. MoE has set a target of one female teacher per school. A woman has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Speaker. There is risk of these quotas backfiring if the pioneering women in these role-model positions are not provided the support and resources needed to contribute, achieve and earn the respect of both men and women.

MoE, to its credit, has tried numerous incentives to encourage girls' participation during the last decade. Special effort has been taken to devise incentives for girls living in economically poor or low enrolment areas. The incentive list includes scholarships, mid-day meals, free books, free uniforms, and subsidised hostel accommodation to foster remote village girls becoming primary teachers. Although evaluations have not been comprehensive or systematic, there is ample evidence that ambivalence in promoting, implementing and monitoring these initiatives sharply reduces their collective potential. This is one of the many proofs that, 'policy and implementation have not been well connected.' (Bajracharya-interview) It is also one of the many signals that DEOs and their supervisors need gender training, a combination of clearer guidance and more effective monitoring, and a performance-linked salary structure. In Biratnagar, the Women Development Officer is the only woman in the 32-member district-based government team.(Maskey-interview) The combination of low numbers of women and low gender sensitisation in local government ranks is a contributing factor to ineffective implementation. This issue needs immediate attention.

Quality Education is the product of maximising the talents and resources of all stakeholders. The catalyst is collaboration. Several structures are now in place that could bring valuable cooperation and collaboration on education initiatives. Recent experience suggests, however, that more strategic effort must be invested to ensure that the new organizational structures reach their potential.

The Central Coordination Committee, chaired by the Minister of Women & Social Welfare, is already vulnerable to "indifference and resistance" in line ministries.(Khatiwada-interview) Unless strategic commitment is rallied, the CCC will forfeit its potential to facilitate holism and to monitor and evaluate the government's empowerment programmes. If the CCC is made impotent, there is no other catalyst that will maximise cross-government efficiencies and opportunities for integrated formal and non-formal education in the schools, literacy and NFE classes and other extension venues. Leading feminists also warn that if the Ministry of Women & Social Welfare is marginalized, other ministries could revert to being "male-stream". (Bhattachan 1998)

Women and girls would also benefit from more communication and strategic partnering between the MoE and MoWSW, and between the two councils allied to these ministries that foster civil society development and NGO delivery of education and empowerment programs. (Council of Social Welfare and National Non-Formal Education Council). Both councils have got off to a sleepy start in earning stakeholder credibility. Collaborative planning and information-sharing have potential to assist both in maximising their effectiveness.

The recent move of the NNFEC to Sanothimi makes it a half-hour drive from the MoE's main Kathmandu headquarters. Pro-action will be needed to ensure the physical distance doesn't isolate formal from non-formal education planners. The MoE and its NGO/INGO literacy partners have made significant progress in creating fluid entry points between non-formal and formal education/literacy programmes. Close internal and external working relationships will be needed to advance this.

In the last decade, private schools have outperformed public schools. The national Grade 10 school-leaving certificate (SLC) examination is a telling measure. Although MoE does not release comparative figures of private and public SLC achievement, several private schools can document a minimum 90% pass rate. In contrast, not one out of 2,338 students from 140 public schools who wrote the SLC examinations in 1995 passed. (NSAC/UNDP 1998: 95)

Restoring the quality of public primary education is essential to girls, as is expansion of out-of-school and other forms of literacy and non-formal education. A national evaluation of non-formal education in Nepal clearly showed that literacy skills training in non-formal education classes *(ed note: where the majority of participants are female)* is more effective than literacy gained through formal schooling. (CERID-1997b: 11) Literacy classes also have better retention and achievement rates: 50% to 60% of participants who finish basic literacy continue to advanced literacy class. Of special note, the continuation is highest among lower caste women, who are most often the poorest of the poor. (CERID 1997b: 22)

Nepal's wide spread poverty validates MoE's stance that education must be regarded as a tool for poverty alleviation. The government must not lose sight of this as it introduces compulsory education. The impact of a liberal promotion policy in the first three grades will be determined by the quality of continuous assessment, relevance of content, and affordability. Whether compulsory schooling increases access, especially for girls, will depend largely on government making schooling affordable to the poor and the poorest of the poor.

The actual cost to parents and communities has been increasing. A prudent move, prior to introducing compulsory schooling, would have been to comprehensively document the full parental and community cost of primary schooling. The existing information is widely regarded as not delving deeply enough into the complex, and often localized, root causes of poverty and its links to education. Regulation, alone, will not bring girls into the schools.

MoE's quiet disregard of the private sector is denying the Ministry the opportunity to learn from the private schools with a history of excellence. Contact is minimal. Private schools register, agree to teach the national curriculum and ensure their students write government exams at prescribed junctures. Often, this is where the contact ends.

The risks are well identified in *Trends, Issues and Policies in Education in Nepal* (CERID 1998a: 48). "The public schools are becoming the place for the poor and disadvantaged children *(and girls – editor's*

note). In this context, insuring peoples' participation and cost sharing in the public school system is becoming increasingly difficult. This, in turn, will make the gap between rich and poor more visible and wider. It is also paving a way for public schools towards further deterioration. The outcome of such development is likely to widen the socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor."

In the absence of government standards and effective monitoring, the swelling private school network has lost its consistency of quality and integrity. Many private schools operate as boarding schools. There is concern that the motivation behind a minority of private school operators may be the multiple profit from student board, tuition and tutoring more than educational excellence. An emerging need is for MoE to consult the two private school associations, the Private & Boarding Schools of Nepal (PABSON) and The Society for Educational Development in Private Schools (SEDIPS) to develop criteria governing the accreditation, operation and accountability of private schools. Leading private schools support such. (Fr. Maniyar-interview)

One critical, but missing, facet of education in Nepal is the lack of a cohesive programme of information education to those who do not choose to attend formal or non-formal education programmes. Half of Nepal's population is illiterate. For many, there is no access to literacy training. Others, with access barriers removed, still have the personal choice to reject literacy. All have the right to be informed of their basic human rights, AIDS, trafficking, remedies for crop infestation, how to save their children from dying of preventable disease, and much more.

"The key tool needed to mainstream women in the economic process is information – well-based, reliable, timely and relevant information." (UNIFEM-1995: 13) Information education is not as deeply empowering as literacy. Yet, it is empowering and it is essential. Women participants of a savings group in Biratnagar said that before taking literacy classes, many of them refused to immunise their children. They thought the needle would kill them. How many others, living outside the reach of literacy, live with this fear?

Many NGOs, INGOs, government extension programmes, and initiatives like the Ministry of Health's Safe Motherhood Programme are responding to some of the information rights of the illiterate. NGOs have documented literacy benefits to include increased use of oral rehydration, contraception, smokeless stoves, and latrines. Their graduates often have the confidence and skill to be more active in the public sphere and to demand, for example, that electricity come into their villages or that beer be banned. Much has been learned about what triggers people to listen, accept and act on new information. Bringing community health volunteers, for example, into the Health Education & Adult Literacy Programme (HEAL) showed how critical it was for these mothers to have a personal relationship with their health worker before they would go to the health clinic.

The learnings from literacy, extension and other non-formal training need to be gathered, analysed, and used to inform the development of a multi-sectoral information education program targeting those who are unreached by formal and non-formal education vehicles. An IEC approach, incorporating modern and traditional communication methods as noted earlier, would assist the government to launch this critical missing link in education programming. With gender awareness being a driver in this programme's development, it should successfully address both practical and strategic gender needs. Special effort must be made to do so, as analysts warn of the school system's "inherent lack of gender clarity" and the tendency of "addressing only the immediate practical gender needs". (UNESCO-Belbase/Shrestha/Singh-1998: 196)

Primary and basic education in Nepal rides a crest of opportunity. Girls and women have the right to education and to share in the decision-making that will make education affordable and relevant. All education initiatives, from policy to implementation and evaluation, will require the participation of girls or women to maximise impact. Participation is critical. Positive change in attitudes and learning achievement will flow from it.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II
Resource Persons

*(*all interviews were conducted August 19-31)*

Anita Adhikari, Women Development Officer, *Ministry of Local Development*, Dhulikhel, Kavrepalanshowk, Nepal.

Charulata Prasada, Gender Programme Officer, *UNDP*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Chhaya Jha, Gender and Development Consultant, *Human Resource Development Centre* (HURDEC), Kathmandu, Nepal.

Chij Shrestra, Director, *World Education*, Kathmandu, Nepal. (NGO Representative - National Non-Formal Education Council)

Chuman Singh Basnyat, Joint Secretary – Planning Division, *Ministry of Education*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Dharai Dhar Khatiwada, Joint Secretary, *Ministry of Women and Social Welfare*, Kathmandu, Nepal

Durga Regmee, Chief, Women's Education Unit, BPEP, *Ministry of Education*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ishwari Bhattarai, Under Secretary, Women's Development Section, *Ministry of Women and Social Welfare*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Fr. Lawrence Maniyar – S.J., Principal, *St Xavier's School*, Kathmandu, Nepal. (private)

Prof. Pramod Shrestha, Director, *Centre for Applied Research and Development*, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Remu Maskey, Women Development Officer, *Ministry of Local Development*, Morang District, Nepal.

Rishi Ram Sapkota, Teacher, *Shree Haisiddhi Primary School*, Dhuilkhel, Nepal. (public)

R. Timilsina, Education Officer, *District Education Office*, Dhulikhel, Nepal.

Satya Bahadur Shrestha, Chief, Secretariat, *National Non-Formal Education Council*, Bhaktapur, Nepal.

Prof. Dr. Sriram Bhagut Mathe, Director, *Nepal Education Foundation*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ramji Prasad Neupane, Canada Fund Coordinator, *Canadian Embassy to Nepal* (Canadian Cooperation Office), Kathmandu, Nepal.

Saroja Paney, Principal, *Xavier Academy and Bhanubhakta Memorial College*, Kathmandu, Nepal. (private)

Umesh Shrestha, Founder Principal, *Little Angels' School*, Lalitpur, Nepal.(private)

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Urmila Aryal, *Renaissance Society Nepal* (Indigenous NGO – women's literacy), Sedhawa, Parsa, Nepal.

Usha Dixit, Under Secretary, Statistics and Computer Section, *Ministry of Education*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Raghavendra Upadhyay, Project Officer – Education, *UNICEF*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

William Robins – S.J., *St Xavier's Social Service Centres*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Joint and Group Discussions

Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) – Joint Discussion.
Participants: ***Erik Winther-Schmidt***, Chief Adviser and ***Jeet Bahadur Thapa***, Programme Officer

Group Discussion – literacy and micro credit graduates, ***Women's Saving Group – Chowk***, Biratnagar.

Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC) – Group Discussion.
Participants: ***Sanju Thapa*** and ***Anita Chapagain*** – Advocates

Nari Bikas Sangh (Indigenous NGO – women's literacy), Biratnagar – Group Discussion.
Participants: ***Sushila Chapagain***, Chair and Founder, I.P. Sangroulla, Executive Director, and staff.

Nepal National Commission for UNESCO (Ministry of Education) Joint Discussion.
Participants: ***Chitra Prasad Devkota***, Secretary, and ***Purna Bhakta Tandukar***, Section Officer.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) – Group Discussion.
Participants: ***Dr. Hridaya R. Bajracharya*** – Executive Director and senior researchers ***Dr. Sumon Tuladhar***, ***Dr. Samira Luitel***, and ***Dr. Bijaya Thapa.***

Sanjiwani School (public 1-12), Dhuilkhel, Nepal. Group Discussion.
Participants: ***Amarnath Yogol***, Headmaster and six members of the teaching staff.

UNESCO-Nepal. Joint Discussion.
Yoshiaki Kitamura, UNESCO Representative to Nepal, and ***Bhesh Nath Ghimire***, Consultant

*titles used as per business cards

Table 1: **Promotion, Repetition and Dropout Rates in Schools in % (1995)**

Grade	Promotion		Repetition		Dropouts	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
One	37.3	37.8	39.6	38.8	23.1	23.4
Two	76.7	77.8	19.9	19.6	3.5	2.6
Three	79.8	80.0	15.5	15.4	4.6	4.6
Four	73.8	76.2	17.8	18.1	8.3	5.7
Five	67.1	65.4	17.4	17.8	15.5	16.8
Six	78.5	79.6	13.9	15.0	7.5	5.3
Seven	83.1	83.9	13.6	15.1	3.3	1.0
Eight	75.4	75.4	19.3	21.1	5.4	2.8
Nine	78.6	79.9	16.0	18.1	5.3	2.0
Ten	••	••	20.6	25.3	••	••

Source: Ministry of Education

Table 2: **SLC Results (1996)**

	Total	Girls	Boys
Appeared	116,002	40,206	75,796
Passed	42,359	12,506	29,853
Pass %	36.5	31.1	39.4
Passed in first division	10,158	2,763	7,395
Passed in second division	22,913	6,666	16,247
Passed in third division	9,288	3,077	6,211

Source: Ministry of Education

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Educational Statistics of Nepal at a Glance 1996 (2053)

	Primary	Lower Secondary	Secondary	Total
Grades	(1-5)	(6-8)	(9-10)	(1-10)
Age	(6-10)	(11-13)	(14-15)	(6-15)
Age Group Population				
Total	2,942,140	1,572,217	951,840	5,466,197
Female	1,421,490	755,692	460,969	2,638,151
Male	1,520,650	816,525	490,870	2,828,046
Enrolments				
Total	3,447,607	791,502	329,833	4,568,942
Girls	1,401,346	300,807	119,102	1,821,255
Girls %	40.6	38.0	36.1	39.9
Gross Enrollment Rate (%)				
Total	117.2	50.3	34.7	83.6
Female	98.6	39.8	25.8	69.0
Male	134.6	60.1	42.9	97.2
Net Enrollment Rate (%)				
Total	69.4	26.8	18.2	48.2
Female	58.7	21	13.9	40.1
Male	79.4	32.1	22.1	55.8
Correct Age Enrollment (%)				
Total	59.4	54	52.6	57.9
Girls	60.7	52.8	53.8	58.1
Boys	58.4	54.7	52	57.8
Schools	22,218	5,506	2,903	22,372
Teachers				
Total	89,378	19,704	16,423	125,505
Total trained	38,980	6,204	7,328	52,512
Total trained %	43.6	31.5	44.6	41.8
Female	18,450	2,528	1,694	22,672
Female %	20.6	12.8	10.3	18.1
Female trained	5,530	836	621	6,987
Female trained %	30.0	33.1	36.7	30.8
Urban Areas				
Schools	1,570	800	539	1,603
Students	355,241	159,312	136,419	650,972
Teachers	10,568	4,595	4,526	19,689
Private Sector				
Schools	3134	2145	1241	4888
Students	279340	135499	66413	481252
Teachers	11514	5076	4991	21581
Ratios				
Student/School	155.2	143.8	113.6	204.2
Teacher/School	4.0	3.6	5.7	5.6
Student/Teacher	38.6	40.2	20.1	36.4
Student/Tr. Teacher	88.4	127.6	45.0	87.0
Female Teacher/School	0.8	0.5	0.6	1.0

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
SWC	Social Welfare Council
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEO	District Education Office
DEC	District Education Committee
EU	European Union
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
IO	International Organisation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
GO	Government Organisation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoWSW	Ministry of Women & Social Welfare
NNFEC	National Non-Formal Education Council
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together
SMC	School Management Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WDO	Women Development Officer
VEC	Village Education Committee

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